Press release

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Met Office predicts a fine future in Exeter

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Under Secretary of State for Defence Dr Lewis Moonie today announced that the Met Office has chosen Exeter as the preferred location for its new headquarters. The nation's weather and climate experts are likely to move to a new building in the city by March 2003 after more than 40 years in their current Bracknell headquarters.

Making the announcement Dr Moonie said: "Exeter will offer an excellent environment for Met Office staff. It has all the necessary links and local facilities for a world-leading weather centre."

The search for a new location has taken over twelve months of hard work. In September a short-list of four towns and cities was announced, and after much deliberation Exeter has been successful. The other locations on the shortlist were Norwich, Reading and Bracknell.

Following the announcement Peter Ewins, Chief Executive of the Met Office, said: "We are very impressed by the facilities which Exeter has to offer, and by the enthusiasm shown by local officials in encouraging us to move there. Our relocation, along with other changes at the Met Office which we will be announcing next week, will provide us with the foundation to build a secure and successful future. Moving to Exeter will allow us to offer our customers improved services at a price they can afford. It will also be a wonderful opportunity for our staff and open up new opportunities for local employment."

The Met Office will bring over one thousand people to the area and its employees will work in fields such as weather forecasting, scientific research, IT, sales and marketing. Although the organisation recruits many staff nationally there will be employment opportunities for local people. It will also bring some of the most sophisticated scientific equipment in the world including its super-computers which can accurately forecast the whole world's weather in a matter of minutes.

Peter Ewins continued: "This has not been an easy decision because all the locations on our shortlist had obvious strengths. I have said before that any one of them would provide a fitting location for our new headquarters. However, I am sure that we have made the right decision in choosing Exeter as our preferred site and we look forward to a long and happy relationship with the area and the people of the town/city in particular. At this stage though, we must stress that Exeter will still be described as our preferred site until we have chosen a private sector partner to work with on the project and a contract has been signed."

Notes:

1. The Met Office is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence.

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